2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



yahanda, and attain Ne'ban. He is a favourite subject for pictures, which represent him sitting under his brazen roof, or on the stump of a tree, eating out of an alms-bowl, which he carries in his arms. Sometimes he is depicted gazing sideways up to the skies, where he seeks a place that is not polluted by corpses. Such a spot is not to be found on earth, where every stock and stone is but the receptacle of a departed spirit. The notion is like that of the Tibetan monks, who look upon the earth as simply a vast graveyard. They carry human finger-joints strung together for a rosary, eat their food out of a human skull, and instead of horns for trumpets use the bones of a man's forearm. "We are dead," they say, "and dead men have nothing to do with the things of the living."

Of a similar character to this illuminating of the pagodas, the town, and the river, is the letting loose of fire-balloons, from the end of Lent to the Tawadeintha festival in Tasaungmôn. The balloons are sometimes very big, but they are simple enough structures. A bamboo framework is covered over with the thick, coarse, home-made paper manufactured from the bark of the mahlaingbin (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), which also supplies the material for the black parabaik note-books. At the bottom, across the open mouth of the balloon, is a little platform, on which pitch is heaped, and with torches attached to it. The balloon is then tethered to the ground. The torches and resinous matter are lighted, and when the strain on the stays is considered sufficient, they are cut, and the balloon goes off. They are dangerous in large towns, and are forbidden there, but the Burman considers that the law applies only to the ground round the town, and dozens are let off every year from spots only a hundred yards or so outside of municipal limits. Not unseldom dôn, rockets, and other kinds of fire-works are attached to them, not by any means tending to make them safer for the houses below. This mi-eing byan, as it is called, is in honour of the Sula-mani payă, a pagoda erected in Tawadeintha, over Mount Myinmo, by the Thagya, king of the Nat-dêwas. When Prince Theidat left his palace, his wife, and forsook all to become a Buddha, he rode as far as the river Anawma and leaped over it on his famous

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



hours, and there are instances recorded where it was not till the third day that a definite result was arrived at. The explanation is simple enough to a Burman, and it is surprising that it has not hitherto been given by any writer on Burma. It is a work of the greatest possible merit to drag a pôngyi's body to the funeral pyre, and this kutho falls to the share of those who win in the tug-of-war. The late Captain Forbes said that the explanation was that "the conquering village will get the better of their losing rivals in all sports, contests, or other matters during the year." But this is impossible where the winning side may be composed of men from a score of different villages in circles remote from one another. Besides, there are no championship meetings in Burma. It is to be noted also that during the lônswèthi it is usually only the payaung bông that is on the car. The actual coffin is brought down afterwards.

At last the coffin is brought to the pyre and hoisted up to its lofty platform, beneath which is stored a great quantity of combustible material: wood soaked in oil, pitch, and abundance of scented chips. Then nothing remains but to light it. When a layman is burnt, fire is set to the pile by the nearest relations with a box of Bryant and May's matches. But this is much too worldly a method for a member of the Thenga, and even the fire obtained by the friction of a plug in a hollow bamboo—an ingenious amplification of the two dry sticks of a variety of barbarous tribes, common in most monasteries—would fail to satisfy the dignity of a pôngyi. The pyre is lighted by rockets fired from a distance. Scores of these dôn have been prepared weeks beforehand, and many have been carried round triumphantly in procession by the people who have made them, a band of music preceding, and young men and girls dancing and singing of the potency of the powder and the accuracy of the aim which will gain for them the glory of setting fire to the pyre. Each rocket has a figure of some kind, a nat-dèwa, a tiger, a hare, or a bilu attached to it. Some of them are of huge size, constructed of the stems of trees hollowed out and crammed full of combustibles, in which sulphur largely predominates. Many are eight or nine feet long and four or five in circumference, and secured

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



764 792 389 by iron hoops and rattan lashings. Up in Mandalay some are very much larger. These are let off at the funeral pile from a distance of forty or fifty yards, the largest being mounted on go-carts, and many others guided by a rope fastened to the pya-that, the rocket sliding along by means of twisted cane loops. The great majority fail to have any other effect than making a great splutter and poisoning the air. A few refuse to budge at all; others topple off their carts and fizzle erratically on the grass. A pôngyi byan in the old days was frequently attended with loss of life. Some one, at any rate, of the bigger rockets was sure to fly off at a tangent and plunge into the crowd, where its weight, to say nothing of its fiery belchings, found one or more victims. Even now it is only by the strictest police regulations and a rigorous maintaining of order among the spectators, and system in the pyrotechnists, that like catastrophes do not happen. At last some lucky dôn plunges right into the inflammable materials piled below the bier, and in a few minutes the flames are leaping high above the topmost pinnacle of the spire. Roof after roof falls, setting fire to the offerings placed round the basement. The joints of bamboo explode with a noise like a pistol shot; the crowd cheer each separate occurrence, and when finally the central spire falls with a hiss, a shout rises from the multitude which suggests anything but death and pious observance. But here [761] in the manôtthapyi all is changeful, sad, and unreal, and one more death brings but nearer to the final rest of Ne'ban.

When the last smouldering embers have cooled, the monastic brethren search for any pieces of bones that may remain, and these are carefully gathered up and buried somewhere near the pagoda. Sometimes, in the case of a particularly saintly man, they are pounded down, mixed into a paste with thitsi, and moulded into an image of the Buddha, which is stored up in the monastery. The custom followed in other Buddhist countries of erecting a shrine over the dead is, in accordance with the teachings of Shin Gautama, an honour but rarely accorded in Burma. In the Shan States they are commoner, but are rarely anything more elaborate than a stucco-covered block of bricks, about three feet high and pointed at the top.

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

202. SETTING NETS FOR DEER.

which a second party is in hiding with dogs. At a sign, the dogs are slipped and the deer chased headlong into the nets, where they are caught or cut down before they can get clear.

*Nat* and *thamin*, which would clear the net at a bound, are coursed with greyhounds of local breed (*Kamâbi*) when they have ventured far enough into the open. The Burmans have been acquainted with firearms since the fourteenth century of our era. Saltpetre they obtained by percolating with water the droppings of bats accumulated in caves, and boiling down the lye; it was also obtained from certain marshes; sulphur probably came from China. The old flint-lock is still a favourite, because the ammunition is easy to procure. Weapons were bad, and the *taba* is a poor marksman; but he manages to approach very near to his quarry. Cross-bows, snares, and traps for game are used by the hill people, in default of firearms. Such venison as is obtained is hurried off to the nearest market town, where it is retailed fresh. If it cannot be thus disposed of, it is cut into strips and sun-dried. Next to deer, the chief quarry is the wild pig. Wild buffaloes ("bison," *pyaung*) frequent the forests. In a few localities a wild ox is found (*saing*). A wild goat lives in some of the rocky limestone hills. The hare and the partridge are common in the open country of the dry zone and the plateau-land of the hills. Peacocks are not uncommon in some localities, but are nowhere so abundant as in India. A silver pheasant (*yit*) is common in the bamboo forests. The great argus occurs in the extreme south. Wild or jungle fowl (*tine-dyet*) are common in all the dry forests. Decoy-birds are used for snaring these, and also the ring-doves (*dyé*). Ducks,

203. KAMABI DOG

224
[231]
411
389
[262]
224
136
[231]